Why Use a Probe When Taking Hay Samples

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To accurately determine the quality of the hay you are feeding, a representative sample must be taken using a hay probe. Grab samples, where you “pull hay from different bales”, will not provide uniform samples for analysis. All of the feed companies and extension offices have hay probes available. The Kentucky Department of Ag will also come out, sample and test your hay.

For square bales of hay, 15 to 20 bales from each lot of hay should be sampled using a hay probe. A lot of hay is defined as hay from the same field that has been cut, handled, baled, and stored under the same conditions. For large round bales, sample at least 10 bales. In a bucket, mix the sample thoroughly, and a quart of the sample is used for laboratory analysis. Once the results come back, use these results to allocate your hay and to balance rations for the various groups of cattle on your farm.